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A Misunderstood Passage

— in —

Aeschylus.

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IV. — *A Misunderstood Passage in Aeschylus.*

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THE chief purpose of this paper is to prove that the traditional interpretation of *Prometheus* 119 (ὀράτε δεσμώτην με δύσποτμον θεόν) is incorrect. Wecklein¹ remarks: "The imperative has the sense of ὀρᾶν πάρα." Sikes and Willson in their school edition (Macmillan, 1898) tacitly accept Wecklein's interpretation, since on moot points it is their practice to cite the work, if they approve, and to point out the divergencies, if they take issue with the German scholar. In the preface they declare that they have examined this edition "both in the original and in Allen's translation." More, in his version² (which bears evidence of a careful comparison of texts and of commentaries), renders "Behold me fettered, the god ill-fated." These citations are sufficient to show that ὀράτε is generally understood to be an imperative, equivalent to ὀρᾶν πάρα;³ and nowhere have I been able to find a different explanation. Nevertheless, it is not to be inferred that such a conception of the passage is universal, or has even gone unchallenged down to the present day, any more than that ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζῶν αἰώνιον ἔχειν (John, V. 39) is universally regarded as meaning "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," simply because the Authorized Version translates it so, many (if not most) graduates of theological seminaries from the pulpit preach it so, and the Revised Version fails to state dogmatically that it is not so. The parallel is a good one, since the mistakes are identical in character. A graduate of one of the most renowned seminaries in the country recently took the passage just quoted for his text and exhorted his congregation to read their Bibles more, because this injunction

¹ Allen's translation.² Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1899.³ Cf. *Ag.* 1354 ὀρᾶν πάρεστιν, *Cho.* 253 ἰδεῖν πάρεστι, 961 πάρα . . . ἰδεῖν.

was laid upon them by Christ himself. Yet in a book dedicated to Charles II. (written in 1675) by a member of a sect that is generally supposed to have despised learning at that time, I read these words: "Moreover, that place may be taken in the indicative mood, Ye search the scriptures; which interpretation the Greek word will bear, and so Pasor translateth it: which by the reproof following seemeth also to be the more genuine interpretation, as Cyrillus long ago hath observed."¹ But the average student, as well as the layman, is wont to follow tradition, even if he stultifies himself by making a perfectly clear and intelligible passage pointless by his interpretation. That errors are often perpetuated simply because the writer, or teacher, will not think for himself might be shown by numerous examples. In Lysias, I. 18, *μύλωνα* appears even in the *editio altera aucta et emendata* of the Teubner series (Scheibe). Some of the more ancient writers may have pointed out that the verb in our Aeschylean passage is not imperative, but it is a more difficult matter to prove this for *ὀράτε* than for *ἐραυνάτε*, since the former makes good sense as commonly interpreted, the latter nonsense.

But it is not sufficient to say that it makes good sense; the critic must ask himself the question: "Is it the Aeschylean sense?"

In the first place, it would never have occurred to me to take *ὀράτε* as imperative, if my attention had not been called to the matter by the annotators and translators—from the tenor of the passage I do not expect an imperative. From the time Prometheus utters the exclamation *ἄ ἄ* till he says *ὀράτε δεσμώτην με δύσποτον θεόν* his mood, or rather moods, are clearly marked, both by metre and by word: *τίς ἀχῶ, τίς ὀδμὰ προσέπτα μ' ἀφεγγής* (surprise and anticipation) *ἔκειτο τερμόνιον ἐπὶ πάγον* (emotional excitement) *πόνων ἐμῶν θεωρός, ἥ τί δὴ θέλων* (strong emotion produced by the thought of a possible sympathizing witness—observe the long vowels in which feeling is wont to dwell), and then comes the verse in question, which apprises the unknown visitor of the facts.

¹ *An Apology to the True Christian Divinity*, written in Latin and English, by Robert Barclay (pp. 91 ff.).

In that announcement Prometheus appeals to the strangers' pity: "Whoever you are and whatever your object, ye see in me a god ill-starred in bonds." The succeeding verses are in perfect consonance with this interpretation, and the pathos and beauty of the passage are certainly enhanced by this rendition.

Wecklein has totally misconceived the attitude of Prometheus toward the newcomer. The feeling of anger and indignation finds no lodgement in the sufferer's heart at this moment. *Cadit ira metu*. Nor does Prometheus regard his visitor as "unwelcome." His emotions are wonder and fear. He is nervous. The Oceanids observe this and, accordingly, their first words are words of comfort and encouragement. They desire to allay his fear. The sufferer is bespeaking compassion (cf. 246) of a *φιλία τάξις* (if haply such the stranger be). He is not indignantly summoning them to gaze upon a god ignominiously treated. The tense of the verb alone indicates that this is the feeling with which Prometheus says *ὀράτε*. Not until he has been reassured by the kind words of his sympathizers does the Titan's mood change (and in this the poet's representation is psychologically correct), when in tones of mingled plaint and indignation (with the *aorist*) he says *δέρχθητ', ἐσίδεσθ' οἷω δέσμῳ | προσπορπατὸς τῆσδε φάραγγος | σκοπελοῖς ἐν ἄκροῖς | φρουρὰν ἄζηλον ὀχίσσω* (141 ff.). Nor does he, when addressing the chorus, ever use any other tense than the *aorist* (273, 274). Furthermore, Prometheus employs practically the same words (*πόνων ἐμῶν ἥκεις ἐπόπτης*) when he speaks to his friend and sympathizer, Oceanus (298); but he does not feel that the latter has come *τερμόνιον ἐπὶ πάγον* to gloat over the torments of the fettered Titan. He has come, it is true, to gaze upon the sufferings of the ill-fated god (cf. *θεωρός* in 118), but to feel for and with him—*θεωρήσων τύχας ἐμὰς ἀφίξαι καὶ συνασχαλῶν κακοῖς*. Then he says *δέρκου θέαμα*, where both the present and the imperative are in place.

An exact parallel to the verse under discussion is found in 612, where Prometheus makes himself known to Io: *πυρὸς βροτοῖς δοτῆρ' ὀράς Προμηθέα*. The mood is determined by the number. If the plural had been used, it might well have

been taken as an imperative (cf. 69). Compare Aristophanes, *Lys.* 412 (ὁρᾶτε μὲν με δεόμενον σωτηρίας). If ὁρᾶτε is imperative in *Prometheus* 119, it is the only example in Aeschylus, whereas the aorist is frequent: ἴδετε (*Cho.* 406, *Sept.* 111), ἴδεσθε (*Cho.* 973, 980), ἰδοῦ (*Cho.* 231, 247), ἰδέ (*Suppl.* 349 ἰδέ με τὰν ἰκέτιν), ἰδέσθω (*Suppl.* 103), ἰδόμεθα (*Eum.* 142), μὴδ' ἴδῃς (*Suppl.* 424 — naturally, by reason of the neg.). So with the optative: ἴδοιμι (*P.V.* 973, *Cho.* 167), ἴδοιτο (*Suppl.* 209), ἴδοισθε (*P.V.* 895). The indicative ὁρᾶτε occurs frequently (*P.V.* 674, *Ag.* 1217, *Cho.* 1034). The singular is found occasionally of intellectual perception (*P.V.* 997 ὅρα νῦν εἴ σοι ταῦτ' ἄρωγὰ φαίνεται, *Eum.* 255 ὅρα ὅρα μάλ' αὖ . . . μὴ λάθῃ, 652 πῶς γὰρ τὸ φεύγειν τοῦδ' ὑπερδικεῖς ὅρα, *Cho.* 924 ὅρα, φύλαξαι μητρὸς ἐγκότους κύνας). The only example of ὅρα in Aeschylus of actual perception is *Eum.* 103 ὅρα δὲ πληγὰς τάσδε καρδίας ὄθεν, but that example speaks volumes for the nature of the present imperative of this verb.¹

Indeed, the behavior of ὁρᾶν in general, in the imperative (cf. the common ἰδοῦ and φέρ' ἴδω), is similar to that of many verbs in the optative, that is to say, they are used regularly with one tense (present or aorist — the character of the verb determines) unless a special point is to be made by the unusual tense, and it is these shifts, this rarity of usage, that gives the beauty to those particular passages. Some verbs are never found in both tenses. When one wishes for the attainment of an action the aorist is employed. So almost always δοίης, but Sophocles *O.C.* 642 διδοίης. In the beginning of the *Equites* of Aristophanes we read Παφλαγόνα . . . ἀπολέσειαν οἱ θεοί, and *Lys.* 757 κακῶς ἀπόλοιτο, 887 ἐξόλοιτο, but the present optative of ἀπολλύναι is never found. The same may be said of the simple verb: ὄλοιτο (*Eur. Med.* 83, 659, *Ion* 704, *Phoen.* 350, [*Rhes.*] 720, 875, 906), ὄλοισθε (*Med.* 114), ὀλέσειαν (*Phoen.* 152), ὄλοιτο (*Rhes.* 772, *Soph. El.* 292, *Phil.* 1019), but never ὀλλύοιτο. Similarly we find μισοίεν regularly, but in Euripides, *Or.* 130 μισήσειαν, and

¹ Look! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:

See, what a rent the envious Casca made:

Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed.

in Antiphon, I. 13 *δίκη κυβερνήσειεν*, where we should expect *κυβερνήῃ*. Likewise *γένοιο* and *γένοιτο* are exceedingly common, whereas *γίγνοιτο* and *γίγνοιο* are extremely rare. Compare *θάνοιμι* Eur. *Ion* 763. On the other hand *χαίρω* is regularly found in the present in the optative. So, too, in the imperative (Ar. *Pax* 338 *χαίρετε καὶ βοᾶτε καὶ γελᾶτε*).

If *ὄρατε* in the one hundred and nineteenth verse of the *Prometheus* be imperative, it is not only the sole example in Aeschylus, but also the only instance in the whole range of classical Greek literature, with the exception of a few examples used in a special sense, like the rare optatives just mentioned.

Neither *ὄρα* nor *ὄρατε* occurs in Homer, but *ἰδέ* (*ἴδε*) is found in *θ* 443, *χ* 233, *P* 179, and *ἴδεσθε* in *Ψ* 469. In the lyric poets *ὄρατε* does not appear. The indicative is found in Solon, IX. 7. In Sophocles the indicative *ὄρατε* occurs in *Electra* 1228 and *Trach.* 1080 (where *πάντες* is added and *ἰδοῦ, θεᾶσθε* precede). The singular *ὄρα* appears several times, but not in the sense of "behold." In *O.C.* 117, 587, 654, and 1167 *ὄρα* is used exactly as it is in Demosthenes, *Leptines*, 84 (*ὄρα δὴ σκόπει*), synonymously with *σκόπει*. So often in Plato. In *Electra* 925 there is no direct object, and we should expect the present (*ἐς κείνόν γ' ὄρα*), while the examples in 945, 1003, *Phil.* 519 and 833 are all of intellectual perception. But in *Ajax* 351, where Sophocles has occasion to use the imperative, he employs the aorist (*ἴδεσθ' μ' οἶον ἄρτι κύμα φοινίας ὑπὸ ζάλης | ἀμφίδρομον κυκλείται*).¹

Euripides has many examples of the aorist imperative, as *Hec.* 808 *ἰδοῦ με κἀνάθρησον οἷ' ἔχω κακά*, *H.F.* 1029 *ἴδεσθε*, *I.T.* 1252 *κατίδετε ἴδετε τὰν ὀλομένην γυναῖκα*, 1279 *ἴδεσθε τὴν πανούργον*, *Or.* 147 *ἴδ' ἀτρεμαῖον ὥς ὑπόφορον | φέρω βοάν*. The same may be said of the optative: *Hec.* 1292 *ἴδοιμεν*, *Cycl.* 437 *εἰ γὰρ τήνδ' ἴδοιμεν ἡμέραν*, *Med.* 920 *ἴδοιμι δ' ὑμᾶς εὐτραφεῖς*, *Or.* 798 *μήδ' ἴδοιμι μῆμα*. The indicative *ὄρατε* is frequent: *H.F.* 508 (which is parallel to the Aeschylean passage) *ὄρατε μ' ὅσπερ ἡ περίβλεπτος βροτοῖς | ὀνομαστὰ πρᾶσσω, καὶ μ' ἀφείλεθ' ἡ τύχη | ὥσπερ πτερὸν πρὸς αἰθέρ'*

¹ Cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 796 *ὄρᾶς ὅσον καὶ τοῦτο δῆτα κερδανεῖς*;

ἡμέρα μιᾷ (= ὁρᾶτε ὡς ἐγώ), *I.A.* 1259, 1592, *I.T.* 267, 1065, 1298, *Ion* 1090, *Or.* 273. In *Ion* 1553 we have no difficulty in determining the mood, for the negative settles the question once for all: οὐ γὰρ πολεμίαν με λεύσσετε. Although a synonym of ὁρᾶτε is used, the resemblance to the *Prometheus* passage is striking. In *H.F.* 1072 ὁρᾶτε is used absolutely, like the frequent ὄρα in the *Oedipus Coloneus*. Many examples might be cited from Euripides where the plural (so far as the sense is concerned) might have been taken for an imperative, as *Hec.* 1115 εἰσορᾷς ἅ πάσχομεν; *H.F.* 1117 ὁρᾷς γὰρ αὐτὸς εἰ φρονῶν ἤδη κυρεῖς, *Ion* 1337 ὁρᾷς τόδ' ἄγγος. Examples of ὄρα μή are *Ion* 1523, *Or.* 208, [*Rhes.*] 570. In *Cyclops* 354 ὄρα τάδε and in *Phoen.* 118 εἰσόρα τὸν πρῶτον are found the only present imperatives of this verb (actual perception) in Euripides.

In Aristophanes, *Pax* 327 ff., we have a good illustration of the difference between the two tenses: ἦν ἰδοῦ, καὶ δὴ πέπαυμαι . . . ἀλλ' ὁρᾶτ', οὐπω πέπαυσθε. The remaining indicatives are *Eg.* 67 ὁρᾶτε τὴν Ὑλλαν; *Nub.* 1326, *Pax* 264, ὁρᾶτε τὸν κίνδυνον ὡς μέγας, 891 ὁρᾶτ' ὀπτάνμιον ὑμῖν ὡς καλόν. In *Lys.* 837 and *Plut.* 215 the verb is used absolutely. The imperative seems to occur in *Achar.* 1227, but, if the mood is not indicative, it is to be explained as *Pax* 887 βουλῇ, πρυτάνεις, ὁρᾶτε τὴν Θεωρίαν, where the present is peculiarly appropriate. Moreover, for metrical reasons alone we should expect to find ὄρα and ὁρᾶτε in a writer like Aristophanes more frequently than ἰδέ and ἴδετε (*ἰδοῦ* and *ἴδεσθε*, used by Homer and Aeschylus, being excluded by the exigencies of the style), whereas the present imperative in prose, as we shall see, is used but once, and there for a special reason. The examples of ὄρα in Aristophanes are *Vesp.* 799 ὄρα τὸ χρῆμα (= *eccere, just think*), 1493 κατὰ σαντὸν ὄρα, *Av.* 651 ὄρα ὡς, *Eccl.* 300 ὄρα ὅπως.

So much for the poets. Of the prose writers Herodotus and Thucydides furnish very few examples of either ὄρα or ὁρᾶτε. All¹ are indicative (ὁρᾶτε *Hdt.* III. 137, IV. 139²;

¹ Actual perception.

² If the verb were plural in VII. 5 (ὁρᾷς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα ζῶα ὡς κεραυνοῖ δὲ θεός) the tendency would doubtless be to consider the mood imperative.

ὄρα ὅπως III. 36; ὄρα νυν (*consider now*) III. 134; ὁράτε Thuc. I. 68, 3, V. 87; ὁράτε ὅπως μή III. 57, 1; ὅτῳ τρόπῳ VI. 33, 3).

When we come to the philosophers we have a different tale to tell. In Plato examples of ὄρα and ὁράτε are particularly abundant. The prettiest illustration in all his works — indeed, in all Greek works — of the distinction made in the use of the tenses of this verb in the imperative mood is afforded by a passage in the *Republic* (514 A and B). It is in the famous allegory of the cave: ἰδὲ γὰρ ἀνθρώπους οἶον ἐν καταγείῳ οἰκῆσαι σπηλαιώδει . . . μεταξὺ δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τῶν δεσμωτῶν ἐπάνω ὁδόν, παρ' ἣν ἰδὲ τειχίον παρφοδομημένον. . . . "Ορα τοίνυν παρὰ τοῦτο τὸ τειχίον φέροντας ἀνθρώπους σκεύη τε παντοδαπὰ ὑπερέχοντα τοῦ τειχίου καὶ ἀνδριάντας. The speaker bids his friend visualize the scene; but the first object to which he directs his attention is a fixed group, the second a fixed wall (hence ἰδέ in both instances), but the third consists of a succession of figures (ἀνθρώπους φέροντας σκεύη, hence the present ὄρα). The aorist occurs also in 434 A, *Alcib.* 132 E ἰδὲ σαντόν, *Phaedo* 72 A. So the first person ἴδω *Rep.* 457 C, ἴδωμεν 603 C, *Leg.* 976 C, *Charm.* 172 C, *Gorg.* 455 A. An excellent example of ὄρα (as distinguished from ἰδέ of mental perception) is *Rep.* 432 C ὄρα οὖν καὶ προθυμοῦ κατιδεῖν. In the first verb the effort is expressed by the tense; in the second by the verb itself (προθυμοῦ), and so the aorist of the first verb is employed as a complement. This use of ὄρα is naturally frequent in Plato: *Rep.* 358 D, 416 D, 613 E, *Alcib.* 115 C (ὄρα εἰ), 121 B, II *Alcib.* 139 D (ὄρα μή), *Rep.* 596 A (ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ὄρα), *Alcib.* 117 C (ὄρα καὶ σὺ κοιῶ), 104 C, II *Alcib.* 145 A, *Rep.* 596 B, *Laches* 188 C (τόνδε ὄρα ὅπως ἔχει). Likewise the dual, *Euthydemus* 274 A (ἀλλ' ὁράτον, ὦ Εὐθύδημέ τε καὶ Διονυσόδωρα, εἰ ἀληθὴ ἐλέγετον), and the plural, *Symposium* 192 E ὁράτε εἰ τούτου ἐράτε, *Laches* 187 D, *Rep.* 642 A.

One might be inclined to think that the reason why ὁράτε is so rare is that the occasions for using the word in this form are comparatively unfrequent, whereas the singular ὄρα would be much commoner. In Xenophon, however, ὄρα occurs only twice: *Cyropaedia* III. 1, 27 ὄρα μή (bis) and ὄρα

εἰ V. 4, 33. The plural, on the other hand, is abundant: *Cyrop.* II. 1, 18 (ὀράτε τὰ ὄπλα), III. 2, 12 (νῦν δὲ ὀράτε δὴ ἐν οἴῳ ἐστέ), V. 1, 10 (αὐτοὶ ὀράτε), IV. 1, 15 (ὀράτε μὴ), IV. 2, 26 (ὀράτε ὅπως), IV. 5, 3 (αὐτοὶ ὀράτε), IV. 5, 44; IV. 5, 46; VII. 1, 22; VII. 5, 43; *Symposium* VIII. 3; *Anab.* I. 3, 16; III. 2, 4; III. 2, 29; III. 5, 5; IV. 6, 7; V. 2, 10 (τάδε ὀράτε· εἰ μὲν κτέ); V. 6, 21; V. 6, 28; VI. 5, 16 (ὀράτε πότερον). All of these are indicative except those followed by μὴ, ὅπως, εἰ, and πότερον.

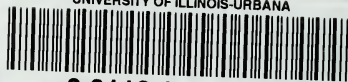
In the orators there is not a single example of ὀράτε imperative. Lysias has eight of the indicative (XVI. 12, XIX. 2, XX. 3, XXI. 13, XXIV. 14, XXV. 34, XXXI. 12, *Fr.* 70) and two of the subjunctive ὀράτε (XXVIII. 2, XXX. 33), but none of the singular ὄρα. The plural occurs but twice in Isaeus (IV. 15 and V. 39), and both are indicative. Demosthenes has seven examples of ὄρα and twelve of ὀράτε (intellectual perception). The indicative of actual perception occurs XXI. 189, XLV. 70, and of mental perception XXIII. 106. As a synonym of σκόπει, ὄρα is often found in Demosthenes, e.g., ὄρα δ' οὕτωςι (XX. 21), ὄρα δὴ καὶ σκόπει (XX. 84). The latter (σκόπει) is almost as peculiar in its behavior as παῦε and παῦσαι, almost as regular as ἴδετε and ὀράτε, that is to say, the singular imperative is usually present, whereas the plural is, as a rule, in the aorist; σκοπεῖτε is rare, but σκέψασθε exceedingly common (Thuc. III. 47, 1; 57, 5; 57, 7; Ar. *Pax* 888; Isae. IV. 9, IX. 4, 30, 36; Xen. *An.* III. 2, 20), whereas σκόπει is the regular form for the singular, σκέψαι unusual (Ar. *Thesm.* 160, 1114; *Eccl.* 124).¹ Compare Plato II. *Alcib.* 143 E ἐπισκεψώμεθα. In like manner ὀρώμεν instead of ἴδωμεν is very rare, but occasionally it is necessary; for, if one says ὄρα μὴ, he would also naturally say ὀρώμεν μὴ (Plato, *Laches* 196 C), but the optative never, except, of course, in dependent sentences, like Xenophon, *An.* III. 3, 2 (εἰ οὖν ὀρώην ὑμᾶς κτέ).²

¹ In [Dem.] XLVI. 16 f. σκέψασθε . . . σκοπεῖτε . . . μὴ σκέψησθε.

² After examining a large number of translations and editions in many languages, if haply I might find a single departure from the traditional interpretation of the passage under discussion, I discover that Hartung (Leipzig, 1852) renders: "Ihr seht in Banden einen unglücksel'gen Gott."



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